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Trinity College

Report of The President

October, 1915



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PRESIDENT'S REPORT.

To the Trustees of Trinity College:—

Gentlemen:—

I take the opportunity offered by the presentation of this, my annual report, to express more directly than I could last June my sincere thanks to the Board for their generous provision of a year's leave of absence. Time will show whether it would have been wiser to contemplate an early termination of my administration, but I shall make the best use possible of this period of rest and hope to return renewed in vigor, energy, and confidence.

The advancing years have not left our organization unscathed. Of the twenty-two Trustees to whom I pledged fealty in 1904, six had, before our latest meeting, passed into the world of disembodied souls—Clark, Graves, Niles, Lockwood, Greene, Morgan—truly a noble list of men who loved Trinity and died while in her service. To this list we now add another name, James Junius Goodwin, since 1896 a member of our Board, prominent in our councils, during his whole service one of our Executive Committee, wise, genial, generous, died just before the dawn of June 23rd, our Commencement Day, and his. Fitly the college recognized, five years ago, his high qualities and conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*. Now he has passed beyond the range of earthly distinctions. May he rest in peace and may light eternal shine upon him.

Scholastically, the year 1914-15 was not marked by any extraordinary events. The College was a trifle smaller than the year before, which may or may not have been due to disturbed economic conditions. The matters which during two previous years seemed to bring the College into rather unpleasant notoriety through legal entanglements of some of its professors, appear to have been largely forgotten, as was certain to be the case.

The academic work of the students was done with about the average results. Unhappily we were obliged to drop

thirteen students in February for failure to reach the minimum standard, and ten more in June for the same reason. We do not discipline a larger proportion of our students in this way than are disciplined at other institutions of our type. Nevertheless it is a very melancholy situation when we have to count on a definite and rather large percentage of idle, useless men in our undergraduate body at all times.

The vacancy caused by the resignation of Professor Ray has been filled by Professor E. F. Humphrey; who, when this report is presented, will doubtless be engaged in the work of his department.

Early in August Mr. Walter B. Briggs, the Librarian, presented his resignation. He leaves us to take up work at the new Harvard Library. This action of Mr. Briggs's was not unanticipated, though after the 15th of July I supposed that he had decided to stay with us. It chanced, however, that the matter of his successor had been discussed by several competent persons, and I was prepared at once to nominate Professor Arthur Adams, for eleven years a member of our English Department, to the Librarianship. Professor Adams was strongly recommended by many good judges, notably Mr. W. N. C. Carlton, a former Librarian of this College. It seems to me that Professor Adams brings to his work many qualities which will insure success. At this writing, August 13th, the vacancy in the English Department has not been filled, but one of several candidates will doubtless be selected in a short time. In appointing Doctor Adams and in inquiring for a new instructor in English I have, of course, acted under the authority of the Committee on Educational Departments. By his own request the appointment of Doctor Adams is for one year only. This has made it necessary to make the appointment to the English Department also temporary. The object of this arrangement is to allow Doctor Adams to return to his present work if he should so desire—a contingency which I regard as remote.

The numerous and constant changes in our teaching force certainly do not tend to efficiency. They are mostly caused by the inadequate salaries which we are compelled to pay. During the twelve years that I have been at the head of the College there has been a really surprising number of changes in several departments. Four have left the English Department, three have left the Latin Department, three have left the Department of Biology, four have left the Department of Romance Languages, and four have left the Department of

History and Political Science. Not all of these changes, but most of them, have been on account of larger salaries offered elsewhere. Per contra it is pleasant to think that in German, Chemistry, Greek, Philosophy, Physics, Economics, Mathematics, and Civil Engineering there have been no changes other than minor ones.

It is some seven or eight years since there have been any material changes in our Courses of Study or methods of administering the curriculum, and it seems to me that the time is ripe for consideration of the practical results of our academic system. Our methods are based upon the idea that there are certain studies which are essential to the degree of Bachelor of Arts and certain other studies necessary to the degree of Bachelor of Science, and that after these requirements have been fulfilled students should have a large degree of freedom in selecting their studies; under this limitation, however, that they shall take a considerable amount of anything which they may elect. This last is brought about by making our courses extend throughout an entire collegiate year in almost every case. The elections are, of course, made by the student, and the choice is generally the result of his individual taste, modified by consultation with other students, with his parents, and with the Committee on Electives. Choices are hampered somewhat also by the schedule of hours. As a rule, it seems to me that our men select their courses with a good deal of judgment, that there is little evidence of a search for easy work, and considerable evidence of an effort to adapt electives to the students' plans after leaving college. Eventually, I say, the student makes these elections himself, and I doubt very much whether the judgment of parents or professors is of great value to him in this matter. To determine the trend of the undergraduate mind it may be interesting to see what the students have done during the past four years.

Last Commencement Day we conferred the degree of Bachelor of Arts upon twenty-nine men. Now these men were compelled to take certain courses: namely, three in the Classics, one in Mathematics, one in English, one in Philosophy, one laboratory course in Science, and certain work in German or French. Some of this work may be offered for admission however. Aside from these courses these candidates for the degree of Bachelor of Arts studied what they pleased under the limitations implied in the schedule.

I have made out the following table showing what men took more than was required in the several subjects. The

figures following the titles of subjects show the number of men who went on further than they were obliged to go:

Mathematics	4
Philosophy	18
History	28
Economics	20
Classics	15
English	29
French and German	14
Other Modern Languages	13
Civil Engineering	2
Physics, Chemistry, and Biology	7
Geology	8

It should be noted that in History six of the twenty-eight took only one course; in Economics twelve of the twenty took only one course; in Modern Languages other than French or German nine took only one course; in Geology seven took only one course. It seems likely that in those cases where a single course was chosen the election was made rather to fill out the schedule than for any definite educational purpose.

The question: "What constitutes specialization" is rather a difficult one, as our departments vary so largely in the amount of opportunity offered and in the preparation required for special work. This following table, therefore, dealing still with the twenty-nine Bachelors of Arts, 1915, is built upon my opinion of the proper definition of the word "specialization". It seems to me that

4	specialized in	Mathematics
3	"	Philosophy
3	"	History
4	"	Economics
3	"	Classics
15	"	English
2	"	French

The prominence of the Classics in the first of the foregoing tables is gratifying to those who, as so many do, regard the Classics as the foundation of a liberal education. The very great attention given to English is conspicuous in both tables. It is not easy to account for the fact last mentioned except on the theory that it represents a real interest in English Literature and the history of the English Language. For very few is this study in any sense vocational. I am confident that it is not easier to the student than many other studies. The facts appear to me to represent the disposition of the Trinity undergraduate. There are other interesting

facts which appear from the study of these tables to which especial attention need not be called here.

Turning now to the other branch of our college work, we conferred the degree of Bachelor of Science last June upon eighteen men. The Science men also have certain required work as necessary to their degree. They must have six courses in foreign languages, of which at least three must be French and German. They must have one course in English, two in Mathematics, one in Philosophy, and four additional courses also from Mathematics or the Physical Sciences, including Geology. One of these last must be a Laboratory course. Tables formed like those above show that of the Science men who went further than they needed to were:

In Mathematics	12
Philosophy	4
History	11
Economics	8
English	15
French and German	6
Other Modern Languages	6
Civil Engineering	6
Physics, Chemistry, and Biology	8
Geology	12

Two of the Science men took courses in the Classics. Of the foregoing, four men took one course only in History; one took a single course in Economics; four a single course in Modern Languages other than French and German, and one took but a single course in Civil Engineering.

The table of specialization work constructed under the same theory as that for the Arts men shows that:

4	specialized in	Mathematics
3	"	Philosophy
2	"	History
3	"	Economics
4	"	English
2	"	German
5	"	French
5	"	Civil Engineering
4	"	Physics
6	"	Chemistry
4	"	Biology

On the whole it seems to me that the work of the Science men was more wisely distributed than that of the Arts men, but this after all is a matter of opinion. The interest in English

is obvious, but not quite so pronounced as in the case of the Arts men.

It is my conviction, entertained for many years and frequently expressed, that we should get better and more profitable work from the students if our unit were, instead of three hours a week for a year, changed so as to be five hours a week for a term. The normal student now carries five studies at a time. The effect of concentration could hardly prove to be other than advantageous. One symptom of this is that when a man becomes thoroughly interested in a study he is apt to take three or four courses in the same subject at a time. This is evidenced in many cases in the English Department and in History, somewhat less conspicuously in Philosophy. Of course in many other subjects, especially Mathematics and the Sciences, the work is of such a nature that it must be taken consecutively; that is, each course is based upon those before it, and the courses are not such as can be taken simultaneously. Still, even in these subjects, we do find men taking more than one course at a time in the same department. I respectfully suggest that some Committee of this Body confer with members of the Faculty regarding the practicability of some such change as that which I have suggested.

I have been interested during the last few years in watching the progress of what seems to me a gradual reaction from the lecture system for undergraduates in favor of more text-book work. My own opinion is that in most departments the lecture method of instruction has been considerably overdone. In spite of what its advocates say, I think it fairly evident that first, undergraduates, especially the younger ones, are incompetent to take useful notes. The highest compliments I have ever received I recognized in the astonishing things which my own students have taken down as their notes on my lectures, apparently believing the most preposterous statements because I made them. It is, of course, gratifying to a professor to have all kinds of super-foolishness accepted on his authority, but it is not improving to the average student. Men who are more successful in putting down approximations to the real meaning of the lecturer find it very easy to pass examinations after a very little cramming. In writing thus about the lecture system I do not overlook many arguments in its favor, but I wish to place on record my opinion that more text-book work and more frequent recitations would conduce to the intellectual improvement of the young men whom we are trying to educate.

In discussing, as I have, two or three purely educational and academic problems I have been moved by a hope that a Committee of your Body would interest themselves more intimately with these questions. Of course the Faculty are experts in such matters and ought to be. Nevertheless the judgment of an expert is of value as it is accepted and endorsed by those in whose behalf it is exercised. Necessarily the opinions of a body of experts, each of whom is a specialist in a rather narrow line, must meet the criticism and commend itself to the judgment of the larger world; and the College Faculty must recognize, and I think I may say it does recognize and value the deliberate judgment of the world outside their circle. It is for this reason then, I say again, that I suggest a more intimate connection between some part of the Board of Trustees and the Professors.

At our last meeting the question of proceeding with our effort to raise money was, if I remember aright, referred to the Executive Committee with power. I sincerely trust that some effort may be made without waiting for my own return to active service. I know I shall not be misunderstood if I point out, as I have done before, that in many recent cases of successful financial campaigns by colleges, members of the Board of Trustees other than the President have often been active and most successful. In this connection I take pleasure in reporting that I have been informed by Mrs. James J. Goodwin that in a memorandum not constituting a part of his official will, Mr. Goodwin provided for the payment of twenty-five thousand dollars to Trinity College. I do not know whether this munificent gift is accompanied by any conditions. If it is not, would it not be appropriate to put with this twenty-five thousand dollars the equal sum which Mr. Goodwin contributed some years ago, making the whole into a special fund to bear the name of the donor?

Our body now consists of twenty-two members of the twenty-four constituting the full board. It may be thought desirable to elect a new member, and I may say that the name of J. P. Elton of Waterbury has been placed in nomination. Mr. Elton is a graduate of ours in the Class of '88 and he has had a distinguished career. It seems to me he would be an admirable Trustee. He has agreed to serve if chosen.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

F. S. LUTHER,
President.